

### Exploring the landscapes of power: space, people and power in Tara Hategului, Romania

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# EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPES OF POWER. SPACE, PEOPLE AND POWER IN ȚARA HAȚEGULUI, ROMANIA

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## **Exploring the landscapes of power. Space, people and power in Țara Hațegului, Romania**

**Theodor Cepraga, Marian Marin**

**Explorând peisajele puterii. Spațiul, oamenii și puterea în Țara Hațegului, România.** Conceptul de putere și relațiile sale cu spațiul pot fi analizate din perspectiva așa numitor peisaje ale puterii. Articolul se concentrează pe Țara Hațegului, regiunea din sud-vestul Transilvaniei cunoscută pentru evoluția sa particulară din punct de vedere socio-politic. Absența unor importante intervenții maghiare alături de prezența unei puternici elite locale a generat un peisaj cultural specific. Regiunea este recunoscută pentru numărul mare de biserici medievale, fortărețe și conace care s-au conservat până în prezent. De-a lungul timpului, au fost întreprinse numeroase studii cu privire la locația, funcția și arhitectura acestor monumente. Articolul prezent cercetează localizarea și dinamica funcțiilor edificiilor și încercă să ofere o altă perspectivă utilizând conceptul de peisaje ale puterii. Relația dintre oameni, spațiu și putere este regândită, analizând amprenta peisagistică a acestor structuri.

**Cuvinte cheie:** peisaj, putere, biserică, nobilime, Țara Hațegului, România

**Exploring the landscapes of power. Space, people and power in Țara Hațegului, Romania.** The concept of power and its relations with different spaces could be analysed in the form of landscapes of power. The article concentrates on Țara Hațegului, the south-western region of Transylvania, known for its particular evolution from a socio-political perspective. The absence of important Hungarian interventions, in conjunction with the powerful local elite, generated a specific cultural landscape. The region is renowned for the large number of medieval churches, fortresses and manors which have survived until present. Various studies have been made concerning the location, the functionality and the architecture of these landmarks. Focusing on the monuments' location and dynamics, the paper attempts to offer a new interpretation using the concept of landscapes of power. The relation between the people, the space and the power is put under a new light by analysing the imprint left by the structures in the landscape.

**Keywords:** landscape, power, church, nobility, Țara Hațegului, Romania

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Power in all of its forms represents one of the most important aspects which captured the attention of geographers in the last decades (Mitchell 2002; Harvey 2000). The power was always defined and advocated as a relation between place, period and people (Foucault 1980). Starting from the premise that the cultural landscape reflects human activity, the best way to decipher it, is to focus on its cultural and natural attributes. Whether these are produced by the local people or by other conquering forces, they are defined by their spatial and temporal evolution. The landscape is subjected to change in the same way as the cultural element. The values of the populations responsible for having shaped the landscape reflect the character it acquires.

If we consider what Derwent Whittlesey (1954) thought of as the sequence of occupation, things could be clarified in the sense that cultural influence is palpable especially due to its physical attributes. What if we study these cultural influences from a different perspective, namely of the asserted power? The cultural landscape gives a sense to the territory and the existing landmarks could be analysed from the perspective of being elements of power. Considering Foucault's (1980) assertion which states that the exercise of power continually creates knowledge, and knowledge induces constantly effects of power, we can firmly avouch that the cultural landscape is the best preserver of the effects generated by the power.

The spatial and the temporal development of the cultural landscape include a historical dimension as well. This historical dimension is supported by the association between knowledge and power and the intensity with which both had expressed themselves and had consequently influenced the natural landscape. The visibility and the long lasting footprint of the cultural landscape largely depends on its integration in one particular region (Faegri 1988).

Although the first approach regarding cultural landscape originated in the Berkeley School with Carl Sauer's (1925) study, the 20th century witnessed a series of important works of geographers who concentrated their energies to this topic. J.B. Jackson (1984) and Denis Cosgrove (1988) produced valuable theoretical accounts regarding this subject, while the humanistic geography of Yi-Fu Tuan (1976; 1977) contributed to the understanding of the role of perception while dealing with various landscapes and places. The theoretical knowledge regarding the landscapes of power was put forward by Mitchell (2002) in his volume where he illustrated and interpreted the relation between the elements of power and landscape.

The current paper aims to shed a new light upon what we recognize to be the elements of the geography of power. We concentrate on the way in which they shaped the cultural landscape in a historical perspective by highlighting the moments of political and religious stability and crisis and their outcomes. The study analyses the spatial

manifestation of power between the Roman period and the post-Communist regime in Țara Hațegului, Romania.

## 2. STUDY AREA

The study area is located in the south-western part of Transylvania, overlapping the second largest depression from the Romanian Carpathians, called the Hațeg Depression (Figure 1). In the geographical, historical and ethnographical literature this area bears the name of Țara Hațegului (Popa 1999; Popa 1988; Vuia 1926). All the regions from Romania which are denominated with the word *țară* raise difficulties in establishing their boundaries. The word has several meanings in the Romanian language. It may refer to the country, as a whole, but more often to some regions located in the Carpathian depressions (Oancea 1979). Ion Conea (1963) argued that the word *țară* was used to indicate the agrarian regions of the whole country as opposed to the mountains. The word also appears in many historical documents where it has the meaning of political structure ruled by local nobleman (Oancea 1979). Therefore, Țara Hațegului comprises both the lowland region of the depression used for agriculture and the surrounding mountains which are playing a vital role in its local economy (Vuia 1926). The limit proposed by Nicolae Popa (1999) for Țara Hațegului takes into account all the meanings of the word *țară* and establishes a boundary defined by 11 administrative units. Our research is based on the 80 settlements located within this area.



Figure 1. Location of Țara Hațegului within Romania

### 3. METHODOLOGY

In order to get a full understanding of the landscapes of power from Țara Hațegului, it is necessary to analyse the major landmarks which shaped the current landscape. The best way to investigate this issue is to divide the identified landmarks of power into five different categories. The first category concentrates on the ruins of the Roman capital from Țove Hațegului, its relation with the surrounding settlements and its evolution during the Middle Ages. The second category analyses the role and the influence held by the fortresses and the noble courts which were constructed during the medieval period. The landscape of power from the last thousand years was powerfully imprinted by the churches erected by the Orthodox, the Catholics, the Protestants and the Greek-Catholics. The Modern Period is characterised by the appearance of castles and manors. Many of them were built on the ruins of the ancient noble courts and their function related to power was pretty much the same with the one of the strongholds. During the Communist Period, four reservoirs together with their dams were built to underline the new, so-called, power of the people. Although the landmarks of power appeared in the landscape at different periods of time, their function evolved, creating a different perspective upon them because "the different elements that make up a landscape do not change at the same rate nor at the same time" (Darby 1953, pp.5–6). Our analysis concentrates on each and every category of these landmarks but it also takes into consideration the function related to power held by them at different times in history. By analysing the context which led to the appearance of the landmarks, their relation with the already existing monuments and the impact they had in the landscape, the paper demonstrates the existence of a landscape of power which was continuously created, transformed and reinterpreted over the last two millenniums.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### **The Roman city**

The Roman conquest of Dacia took place in the 2nd century CE. For almost 200 years, the Roman administration vividly controlled the region. Shortly after the conquest, a new capital called Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa was established in the Hațeg Depression. The new city was set a few kilometres away from the old Dacian capital which was located in the surrounding mountains. It was one of the greatest urban centres in the Roman Empire and got ruined during the barbaric invasions (Nicolae 2002).

Comparing the archaeological data revealed in the last century with the discoveries associated with the Dacian settlements from that time, the footprint of power is impressive. Two millenniums ago, the general infrastructure, the access roads, the water supply and the sewage, together with the public services were at a higher standard compared to the surrounding settlements. The Roman power was also manifested through the specific architecture and the erected buildings which were destined for administration, army and entertainment, as in the case of the great amphitheatre (Figure

2). All these structures reflected the power and the discontinuity of the cultural landscape at that time.

Another target of the newly erected Roman capital was to powerfully contrast the old capital from which it took the name. By locating the city at no more than several kilometres from the Dacian capital, the Romans assured the perfect way of asserting the power by offering a clear contrast between the old and the new city.



Figure 2. The ruins of the Roman amphitheatre from Sarmizegetusa, Țara Hațegului  
(Cepraga, May 2013)

### **The guarding strongholds**

The emergence of the strongholds in Țara Hațegului coincides with the Hungarian conquest of Transylvania. The oldest documented fortified place is the Hațeg Royal Fortress, which was probably erected in the second half of the 13th century (Popa 1972). The Hungarian Kingdom advanced progressively towards establishing an administration in order to govern the new subdued territory. Like in the western medieval Europe, the king had to organize the delegation of power and to establish connections with the local elites (Devroey & Schroeder 2012). A fortification like this was needed not only to secure the presence of the king's representatives, but also to embody the newly settled political power in the local landscape.

Although being rather a small fortress, it was perfectly placed on a mountain peak, just above the city of Hațeg. In case of war or uprising it held a high visibility position towards the lowlands. Beside the military function, the Hațeg Royal Fortress was also probably used to impress the new political power upon the lieges. Its regional importance comes from the fact that it established a new architectural style and set the standard for the local elite in the matter of building strongholds.



Its example was immediately followed by the most influential noble families from Țara Hațegului. In the following centuries several other strongholds were attested. The most famous is Colț Fortress which was built by the Kendeffy family at the end of the 14th century (Popa 1988) (Figure 3). The stronghold is located on a ragged mountain cliff, just above the southernmost village from the valley. Its original purpose is not precisely known, but historians believe that it was probably a refuge and a good observation point of the family's possessions. The considerable size of the fortress matched the wealth and the influence of the Kendeffys and could have been used as a symbol of their regional power.



Figure 3. The ruins of Colț Fortress  
(Cepraga, August 2014)

In the next century, other similar structures appeared at Răchitova and Mălăiești. Little is known about the tower situated south of Răchitova. Its initiators were probably the noble family from Densuș which extended its rule towards the Poiana Ruscă Mountains (Popa 1988). It is less probable that the tower had been designed to be used in battles, considering the fact that the north-western corner of the depression was not so exposed to enemy threats. Its main purpose was to keep the family's treasures safe and to mark its presence in the area. Similar to Răchitova Tower is the fortress from Mălăiești which was erected in the 15th century by one of the noble families from Sălașu de Sus (Popa 1988). Its purpose resembles the other fortresses from Țara Hațegului, underlining the social differentiation between the nobles and the peasants.



Alongside these structures, a number of noble courts were part of the landscape (Figure 4). The historian Adrian Andrei Rusu (2008) suggested that in Țara Hațegului might have existed at least 17 noble courts. Nowadays, the remains of these types of buildings are found only at Râu de Mori and Sălașu de Sus. Both of them are linked with Colț Fortress and Mălăiești Fortress, respectively. Although their primary function was to house the noble families from the village, their architecture clearly marked a sign of power and influence which had to be regarded obediently. The conservation of these two structures is related to the degree of power both families acquired in time. The integrity of their properties lasted until the 20th century, as the villages did not extend close to the noble courts.

The noble courts vanished from the landscape when the noble families which built them ceased to exist and there was no one left to care for them. Another fact that led to their disappearance is related to the construction of manors, during the 18th and 19th century, as residence for the nobles. On the other hand, the fortresses continued to play a crucial role in the regional politics, being actively used in the wars with the Ottomans until the end of the 18th century. From then on, they fell into total decay until half a century ago, when archaeological research shed a new light upon them. Nowadays, they represent a valuable resource exploited in the regional tourism activities, as in the case of Mălăiești Fortress, which suffered important modification during the process of rehabilitation<sup>1</sup>.

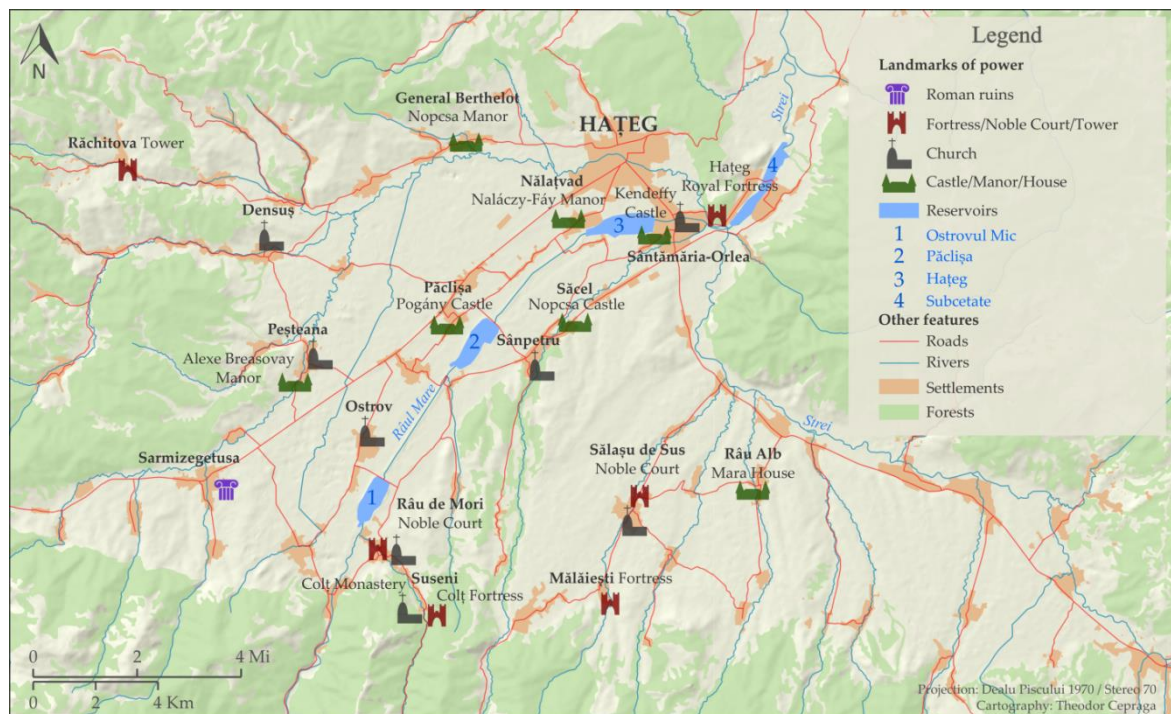


Figure 4. The location of the landmarks mentioned in the text

<sup>1</sup> The historian Adrian Andrei Rusu argues that the current aspect of the fortress has nothing to do with its original appearance (Personal communication made by Cristian Ciobanu, heritage manager of Hațeg Country Dinosaurs' Geopark).

### **The power of the church**

Strongly related to the secular power, the churches created their own landscape of power through what might be called an ecclesiastic influence. The dominant religion in Țara Hațegului was always the Eastern Orthodoxy. While the local Romanian population was entirely devoted to this faith, the conquering Hungarians were Catholics. The written sources from the 13th century brought to light the existence of only two settlements, Hațeg and Sântămăria-Orlea, which paid the papal tithe, revealing the predominance of the Orthodox Church (Popa 1988).

In the Middle Ages, the ecclesiastic institutions were closely connected with the political structures and they were often used to manage the relation between people and their rulers. The newly installed Hungarian rule looked to assert its authority in the landscape by erecting a magnificent catholic church in Sântămăria-Orlea, just under the steep hill where the Hațeg Royal Fortress was located (Figure 4). The edifice was constructed almost in the same time with the fortress, for the Catholic community from the village (Popa 1988). Its late Romanesque architecture powerfully contrasted the orthodox churches build by the peasants or the knezes, which were mostly made up of wood (Rusu 1997). We can only imagine how striking was its appearance compared to the other constructions. This is a clear example of creating a discontinuity in the cultural landscape. Therefore, the political power was doubled by the ecclesiastical power in order to ensure the acceptance of the new authority through landscape transformation.

But not all the orthodox churches were simple constructions made of wood. Some of them, like the ones from Densuș, Peșteana and Suseni, matched the influence of the noble families which built them. The edifice located in Densuș attracted the attention of various researches. Although not clearly dated, the church was initially considered a pagan worship place established by the Romans (Hohenhausen 1775). The latest archaeological findings proposed the 13th century as the period when it was probably constructed (Rusu 1997). Its endurance was granted initially by the influence of the nobles which constructed it and after their disappearance, the building material played a key role in its conservation. It was mostly built of stones dragged off the ruins of the Roman capital, Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (Vătășianu 1930). This is a common feature for the medieval churches built by the powerful noble families from Țara Hațegului. The architecture is not the only particular characteristic of the church. Its location, on the highest point of the village, clearly marks its role as a landmark of power.

As Adrian Andrei Rusu (1997) mentions, there was almost no Romanian village without a church in the Middle Ages. The ones which survive today are associated with influential noble families which wanted not only to construct a worship place, but also to leave an imprint of their power in the landscape. The physical structure of the church was one of the most frequent used elements to impress the landowners' power (Rawding

1990). This pattern is to be found in many settlements from Țara Hațegului, like Peșteana, Ostrov, Sânpetru, Râu de Mori and Suseni, where the religious edifices were erected in the following centuries by the local noble families.

The medieval constructed heritage of the Kendeffy family from Râu de Mori comprises a parish orthodox church and a monastery. The church from Râu de Mori lies near the ruins of the noble court and it was presumably used by the Kendeffys before being conceded to the lieges (Rusu 1997). The monastery is located a few kilometres upwards, on the same valley, at the foot of the Colț Fortress. Its original function is shrouded in mystery because a defensive tower is constructed just above the altar, even though the church is overlooked by the fortress (Rusu 1997). The high density of landmarks built by the Kendeffy family shows how both forms of power, secular and ecclesiastic transformed the landscape in accordance with their concerns and aims.

The 16th century marks the dissolution of the Hungarian Kingdom and the appearance of Calvinism in Țara Hațegului. This led to a change regarding the influence of the church. Even though some Romanian nobles continued to build orthodox churches, many edifices were used together with the Protestants which covered the frescos and dishonoured the orthodox population.

The church from Sălașu de Sus is the most important Romanian orthodox church constructed in the 16th century in Țara Hațegului. Its founders, the Sărăcin family, donated it to the villagers at a later unknown date (Radu 1913). This act is preserved in the local memory by the informal name of the church, „Biserica Iobagilor”, which could be roughly translated as the church of the lieges.

On the other hand, the protestant community tried to create its own landscape of power in the region. It reunited the most of the catholic population from Țara Hațegului and the great majority of the Romanian nobles which wanted to be in favour of the superior rule. Therefore, it formed rather a small community and did not have the necessary force to produce massive landscape transformations. The most famous protestant churches are to be found in Peșteana and Râu Alb (Figure 5). Both of them are located close to the orthodox churches, probably to ease their acceptance and to balance the old faith. The church from Peșteana is the only one which is still used for masses today, while the one from Râu Alb is ruined since the middle of the 20th century. In the same period, the catholic church from Sântămăria-Orlea was transformed by the Kendeffy family into a protestant religious edifice (Rusu 1997).



Figure 5. The protestant church from Peșteana  
(Cepraga, May 2014)

The beginning of the 18th century coincides with the creation of the Greek-Catholic Church in Transylvania. This institution was formed in order to represent both the interests of the Habsburg monarchy, which supported the catholic population, and the interests of the Romanians who were devoted to the Orthodox Church. Throughout the next two centuries, vicars and bishops of the Greek-Catholic Church surveyed Țara Hațegului in order to investigate the state of conservation of the churches and the existence of parochial houses and schools (Vulea 2009).

The reports showed that a large number of churches were in poor condition and had to be reconstructed or rehabilitated. Therefore, the landscape had to face another transformation, this time, showing the power of the newly created religious institution. Elena Camelia Vulea (2009) argues that each and every church from Țara Hațegului suffered interventions in this period ranging from roof repairs, consolidations of the walls and even rebuilding in a different place. Many churches, like the one from Sălașu de Jos were relocated from a hill outside the village in a more central position in order to facilitate the access of the aged people during harsh weather conditions (Vulea 2009).

These events also marked the transition from the wooden architecture to the stone and brick constructions. All these measures led to massive changes in the local landscape which practically saw the disappearance of the wooden churches which characterised the religious architecture and their replacement with massive and imposing constructions under the coordination of the Greek-Catholic Church. These transformations asserted



another version of power, this time, related to the church. The old traditions played a crucial role in the development of authority and the processes of change were interwoven with practices of continuity (Harvey 2000).

The last century is traditionally associated with the birth of the scientific interest in the religious structures from Țara Hațegului and their integration in the cultural tourism. Historical documents and archaeological findings helped researchers to better understand the function of these monuments (Dobrei 2011). Nowadays, the churches which have experienced the utilization of successive generations of inhabitants, having different religious beliefs, helps as to perceive the landscape as a "collection of legacies from the past" (Darby 1953, p.11).

### **Castles and manors**

The transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Period started in Transylvania at the beginning of the 18th century, once the province was totally conquered by the Austrian Empire. Before this moment, a series of social changes took place, altering the medieval way of life. Although Țara Hațegului lacks a comprehensive study about the evolution of its elites, the historian Adrian Rusu (1991; 1992) highlights the most important processes that affected the noble families through several case studies. The most common thing for the ruling class was to split in multiple branches and to receive various noble titles, like counts or barons. As a consequence, in the 18th century, the number of landowners was higher compared to the Middle Ages. So each and every noble family had to secure its position and to imprint its power and influence in the local landscape.

A series of manors were constructed in Țara Hațegului by the noble families who could afford such a demonstration of power (Figure 4). The architecture varied due to the possibilities of each and every noble but compared to the traditional peasant housing, the manors represented a form of discontinuity in the landscape. Their location within the community marked a separation because the majority of the manors were built at the extreme points of the settlements. This process could be assessed as an isolation of the aristocracy from the rest of the society. The resulted landscape was once again used to reproduce power and to embody the social relations (Hansson 2006).

Once again the Kendeffy family was on top with its constructions. The baroque castle erected in 1782 by the count Elek Kendeffy in Sântămăria-Orlea is the most imperious construction of this type in Țara Hațegului. It is located just off the main road, on the site of a previous fortified place. The edifice suffered multiple transformations and became so renowned that even Rudolf, the heir of the Austro-Hungarian throne, spent here ten days while hunting in the Carpathians in 1882 (Nagy Margit 1970). After the Second World War, the castle was nationalized by the communists and in the 1960s,



summer camps were organized in the courtyard. Until 1989 the edifice continued to suffer intense damage. In the present days, descendants of the Kendeffy family which resides in Budapest have regained the castle and did not transform it into a tourist attraction.

Another family which came to be famous in the 19th century is Nopcsa. The Magyar nobles possessed two manors in General Berthelot and Săcel together with another propriety in Densuș. The castle from Săcel was built by a Romanian family and was lost to the baron Franz Nopcsa as a result of some debts (Muntean 2013). The castle was confiscated by the Romanian state after 1918 as with the majority of the Hungarian properties from Transylvania. In the communist period, a special school for orphan children functioned here. The same fate had the manor from General Berthelot (at that time Fărcădinul de Jos), which was donated by the Romanian state to the French general Henri Mathias Berthelot for the assistance provided during the First World War (Nicolae & Suditu 2008). At his death, the general donated it to the Romanian Academy, but in the communist period there was located the headquarters of the local co-operative farm<sup>2</sup>. After the 1989 revolution, the Romanian Academy received the edifice and renovated it in 2010 (Figure 6).



Figure 6. The Nopcsa manor from General Berthelot  
(Cepraga, July 2014)

Similar examples are offered by noble families such as Pogány, Naláczy, Breazovay. The castle from Păclișa was built at the beginning of the 19th century by the Pogány family in a baroque style (Nagy Margit 1970). After the Second World War it was occupied by the soviet army and afterwards it became a hospital for the children with mental disorder. Today, the castle is again a private property and it is not open to public visits. The edifice

<sup>2</sup> Personal communication made by Cristian Ciobanu, heritage manager of Hațeg Country Dinosaurs' Geopark.

from Nălațvad, known as the Naláczy-Fáy Castle was in the property of a high school from Timișoara and today it is part of a litigation between the local authorities and some descendants of the previous landlords<sup>3</sup>. In the last 25 years the castle has suffered intense degradation due to the lack of a proper administration. Another example is to be found in Peșteana, where the 18th century house of Alexe Breasovay served as an administrative building even though it was badly deteriorated<sup>4</sup>.

Alongside these imposing manors, some noble families tried to mark their presence in the landscape even with houses or villas. Ernest Mara is the descendant of the Mara family which has its origins in Sălașu de Sus. After the fall of the communist regime, he took back the family propriety in Râu Alb where he resides today. Although being a small estate, the house from Râu Alb is preserved in the local collective memory as the place where the landlord still lives<sup>5</sup>.

In conclusion, the numerous castles and manors erected by the nobility in Țara Hațegului played an important role in asserting the power of the ruling class during the 18th and the 19th century. At the end of the First World War the majority of the Magyar proprieties were confiscated by the Romanian state when Transylvania was annexed. After the communist took over the power, all these imposing buildings were transformed in hospitals, headquarters of the co-operative farms or administrative buildings. In that period, the main purpose of the socialist regime was to deconstruct the power created by the previous landlords using their building in the benefits of the population. After the revolution from 1989, these landmarks of power became derelict and a series of litigations appeared between the authorities and the successors of the nobility. As a consequence, these outstanding constructions are yet to be integrated in the cultural tourism of the region.

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<sup>3</sup> Personal communication made by Cristian Ciobanu, heritage manager of Hațeg Country Dinosaurs' Geopark.

<sup>4</sup> Personal communication made by Ernest Mara

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Mara states that his ancestors once had in possession the noble court from Sălașu de Sus and also Mălăiești Fortress. He also added that after 1990, when he started the rehabilitation of his house in Râu Alb he found a beam on which it was incised the year 1496. (Personal communication made by Ernest Mara).

### **The power of the people**

The communist regime was totally installed on the 30th of December 1947 when the People's Republic of Romania was proclaimed. One of the first measures took was to nationalize the estates which were not confiscated at the end of First World War. All the sites associated with the noble class were transformed in order to match the expectations of the new regime.

During the 1970s, the communist state reached its peak in Romania. A series of projects which aimed to modernize the country were already put in place. According to the information provided by the Romanian company of hydroelectricity, called Hidroelectrica, in 1974, the Council of Ministers decided to commence a programme of investments in hydroelectricity in the Retezat Mountains and Țara Hațegului. The first interventions did not affect the inhabited place from the lowlands, with a dam being constructed only in the superior basin of Râul Mare, in the Retezat Mountains.

The project evolved, and in 1980, the state approved the continuation of the investments on Râul Mare, even in Țara Hațegului. Therefore, during the 1980s occurred the most abrupt spatial discontinuity in the landscape. Between 1986 and 1991, three reservoirs appeared on Râul Mare, right in the middle of the Hațeg Depression. According to Hidroelectrica, in 2011 another reservoir was inaugurated, near Subcetate, on the Strei River (Figure 4).

Even though the main purpose of the communists was the economic development of the country, their actions caused the biggest transformation in the landscape, resulting in a representation of their power at an unseen scale. The presence of the four dams in Țara Hațegului clearly contrasts the secular and the religious landmark from the previous centuries. Once again the territorial logic varied from one regime to another with their ideologies transforming the landscape.

### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

In this paper we have explored the landscapes of power from Țara Hațegului, Romania. Drawing on the geographical literature concerning the cultural landscapes, the perception of space and the representation of power, the article focused on the landmarks from the region.

The Roman ruins of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa were identified as the oldest manifestation of power in Țara Hațegului. At that time, the newly established city was constructed close to the old Dacian capital, located in the surrounding mountains, in order to emphasize the new ruling power.

The Middle Ages were characterised by the appearance of strongholds located on the nearby hills. The first attested fortress was built by the conquering Hungarians, close to the city of Hațeg. The construction offered the best example which was soon to be matched by the local noble rulers. Therefore, in the following century, strongholds appeared near the noble courts of the most powerful families from the region. Their

function was to guard the family's treasure but also to impress the power into the cultural landscape.

At the same time, the ecclesiastic institution of the church asserted its power starting with the orthodox churches from Densuș and Peșteana whose appearance still raise questions today. Although the Catholic population was far from being a majority, their church from Sântămăria-Orlea clearly distinguishes itself from the other Orthodox edifices. The newly established institution of the Greek-Roman Church in the 18th century transformed the cultural landscape offering the ideal context for the local community to replace the wooden architecture with the stone and brick constructions.

The most outstanding secular constructions from the 18th and the 19th century are represented by the manors erected by the local nobles. Most of the Romanian ruling families adopted the Hungarian religion and their way of life and so the Western architecture was established in Țara Hațegului. The contrast highlighted the power of this class compared to the peasantry. The fate of these impressive manors was sealed soon after the First World War, and with the arrival of the Communists when they were confiscated by the Romanian state and transformed in hospitals, schools and even headquarters of a local co-operative farm.

The last and the most brutal transformation of the landscape occurred at the end of the 20th century when the Communist state decided to build reservoirs in the middle of the Hațeg Depression in order to produce energy. Although the project was economically driven, it left an impressive imprint in the local landscapes of the so-called people's power.

The paper underlines the existence of a landscape of power in Țara Hațegului and unravels the way it was created over the last 2000 years. The construction of the Roman capital in the Antiquity and its decadence during the Middle Ages marks the first important change in the landscape of power. The landscape of the 2nd millennium is the result of the relations between the foreign rule, the local elites, the peasants and the way in which these relations evolved in time. The existence of four different religions in Țara Hațegului can also be easily read in the local landscape. The communist regime offered a new interpretation of the history by denying the traditional values and it brutally transformed the landscape at a scale unseen before. The action of different forces and cultures can be read and interpreted in various ways but future research should always acknowledge the presence of the power imprinted in the cultural landscape.

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